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SUBJECT: DUTCH CABINET APPROVES SUPPLEMENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS
TO ISAF AND OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM

1. Summary: On August 20, the Dutch cabinet decided to provide to ISAF six F-16 jetfighters and a KDC-10 refueling aircraft for a period of eight weeks as of mid-September for the purpose of enhancing security during the presidential elections in October. If a second round of elections occurs, the deployment will be extended for an additional few weeks. The Netherlands will also temporarily supply to ISAF for the purpose of election support a light infantry security detachment to assist the PRTs in the provinces of Kunduz, Baghlan and Takhar. The cabinet further decided to extend the deployment of an Apache helicopter detachment made available to ISAF until April 1, 2005, and to provide a frigate to Operation Enduring Freedom (in the region around the Arabian Peninsula) for three months in the fourth quarter of 2004. End Summary.

F-16 and KDC-10

2. Foreign Minister Bot, Defense Minister Kamp and Development Minister Van Ardenne informed parliament in writing August 20 that the cabinet had decided to provide six F-16s and one KDC-10 to ISAF in response to appeals from President Karzai and UN SYG Kofi Annan to NATO for supplemental military assistance prior to and during the upcoming Afghan elections. The ministers wrote that this deployment satisfied a significant and substantial element of the supplemental resources identified by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) as necessary for election support.

3. The F-16s and KDC-10 will be deployed at Manas AFB, Kyrgyzstan, from where Dutch F-16s operated in the period October 2002-October 2003 within the framework of Operation Enduring Freedom. The ministers' letter pointed out that U.S. forces are based at Manas, and that the U.S. has promised to allow Royal Air Force to make use of U.S. facilities. The Dutch detachment will comprise 170 to 210 troops, depending on the amount of support provided by the U.S. It was observed that the refueling plane alone is not sufficient to meet the total need for refueling capabilities. Although NATO has primary responsibility for the remaining requirement, options are being explored with the U.S. to use the refueling capabilities of Operation Enduring Freedom.

4. In view of the fact that the ISAF's mandate is primarily to assist the Afghan transition government in promoting security and stability and expanding its authority, the F-16s will have a two-folded task. They can be used to show force and to provide close air support to ground forces. On the basis of agreements on mutual assistance between ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom, the F-16s can also be used to provide assistance to Enduring Freedom forces in an emergency situation, as is the case with the present Dutch Apache helicopter detachment in Afghanistan. However, the ministers stressed to parliament that the F-16s would not be used for planned Enduring Freedom operations.

5. The rules of engagement of ISAF are based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter and are "sufficiently robust." In addition, national targeting guidelines apply to the use of Dutch jetfighters that are based on the law of war and the Geneva Conventions, according to the letter.

Apache Helicopters

6. Since the transfer of authority to NATO on March 31, 2004, a Dutch Apache helicopter detachment has operated in Afghanistan, initially for a period of six months. According to the GoNL, the experiences with these helicopters have been very positive, and their presence has been appreciated by both the ISAF command and troops on the ground. The helicopters are mainly used for reconnaissance and the display of visible presence. Occasionally, they operate outside the ISAF territory. On August 20, the cabinet decided to extend their deployment for six months. According to the ministers' letter, a decision to withdraw the Apaches by the original September 30 date -- shortly before the October 9 Presidential elections -- would have run counter to the NATO promise to provide political and military assistance during the elections. The letter notes that the helicopters can also provide assistance to the Dutch PRT in Baghlan as it is being put together and during its initial operations.

Deployment of Dutch PRT in Baghlan

17. Preparations for the deployment of the Dutch PRT in Pol-e Khomri in the province of Baghlan are well under way, according to the ministers' letter. The initial set-up team of about 60 persons will leave around August 24, and upon arrival will start building the required facilities. The initial operational units will leave in early September. By October 1 at the latest, the PRT will be operational, and will therefore be prepared to assist the elections on October 9. The complete buildup operation will foreseeably be ready by mid-November.

18. In support of the deployment of the PRT in Pol-e Khomri, a C-130 transport plane of the Royal Air Force will soon be deployed at Termez AFB, Uzbekistan, for a period of about six weeks. At the request of Germany, this aircraft will also provide assistance to the deployment of the German PRT in the province of Badakshan.

Frigate to assist Operation Enduring Freedom

19. The termination of the F-16 deployment in Manas in October 2003 marked a provisional end to Dutch contributions to Operation Enduring Freedom. The letter notes that the option of a new contribution was, however, always left open. For that reason, the GoNL expects that the U.S. will welcome the present Dutch offer to supply a frigate for three months in the fourth quarter of 2004. Arrangements are still to be made with the U.S. on details on the nature and term of deployment. However, it was pointed out, in general terms, the frigate's tasks and powers will roughly be the same as those during previous deployments for the benefit of Enduring Freedom.

Humanitarian Assistance and Reconstruction

Although the earlier emphasis on humanitarian assistance is shifting to reconstruction, several humanitarian needs remain unfulfilled. According to the letter, the Netherlands has appropriated 15 million Euros for humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan for the period 2004-2006. The Netherlands is one of the largest donors of Afghanistan. In the period 2001-2003, the Netherlands donated 165 million Euros in aid. At the recent donor conference, it made the commitment to provide another 100 million Euros in aid in the next three years. The Netherlands also made a commitment to contribute a total of 75 million Euros, that is 25 million Euros a year, to the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF.) The Dutch contribution to ARTF in 2004 was recently raised with 10 million Euros to 35 million.

Russel